

# LAMPLIGHTER

19 Iyar  
Parshas  
Behar  
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## LIVING WITH THE TIMES

The Torah portion of Behar contains the Biblical prohibition against usury: "Do not take from him any usury or increase, and you shall fear your G-d, that your brother may live with you." Immediately following this verse we are told: "I am the L-rd your G-d who brought you out of the land of Egypt...to be your G-d." Our Sages learned from the juxtaposition of these two verses that when a person accepts the prohibition against lending money with interest, it is as if he accepts the yoke of Heaven. Conversely, one who throws off the restriction against usury, simultaneously throws off the yoke of Heaven as well.

What is so significant about usury that the Rabbis used it to illustrate the concept of subservience to G-d? How does charging interest, or refraining from doing so, express the relationship between man and G-d?

Collecting interest on money means making a profit without exerting oneself, at the expense of another person's labor. Once a person lends money to another, that money becomes the property of the borrower, even though he owes the amount to the one who lent it. A person who charges interest is therefore profiting from money which is not his, and is taking advantage of the fact that it once belonged to him.

By understanding this concept, we understand why avoiding usury is so crucial: G-d's goodness and blessings are only bestowed as a direct result of our labor. Both physical and spiritual rewards are only attainable after much toil and effort. The 613 commandments of the Torah are practical expressions of this principle, each one a specific deed to be performed in order to help us reach a higher spiritual level.

But why is all this work necessary? Couldn't G-d, the source of all good, have bestowed that goodness upon us without the labor? The answer is that it is precisely because of G-d's goodness that He chose this system, for we can only truly appreciate that for which we have worked.

An undeserved gift is called "bread of shame," and provides neither joy nor satisfaction. But when a person works toward a goal and then receives his reward, the value of that gift is appreciated and his happiness is that much greater. That is why we are obligated to expend so much effort in our worship of G-d. Spirituality must be attained through hard work and not conferred as a gift.

The mitzva which best illustrates this principle is the prohibition against usury. When a person refrains from it, according to G-d's will, he confirms G-d's plan for the world, that profit may only be accrued as the result of man's work. A person who charges interest defies, with his behavior, this basic principle which is a foundation of the entire Torah.

## The Humble Mountain Paradox

By Sholom Kesselman

Parshat Behar begins: "G-d spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai . . ."

There is a well-known Midrash that explains that Mount Sinai was the lowest of all the mountains, and so G-d chose it to teach us a lesson in humility: If you want to be a vessel for the Torah, you must feel yourself to be lowly and humble.

This, however, leads to the question: If G-d wanted to teach us a lesson in humility, why give the Torah on a mountain in the first place? Wouldn't a valley be a better representation of humility?

The answer is that we need both: the greatness of a mountain, but the humility of Sinai.

This dichotomy is expressed beautifully in the Parshah itself.

One of the main mitzvahs featured in the Parshah is the Yovel (Jubilee). Every 50 years, the figurative reset button is pressed. All Jewish slaves are set free, and all land that was sold since the previous Yovel is automatically returned to its original owners.

What is the point behind this reset? Why did the Torah institute such a mechanism, where all transactions become undone and everything reverts back to its original status?

There are two very different and profound answers found in the works of the Rishonim (early commentators).

The Lesson in Humility:

According to the Chinuch (an anonymous 13th-century commentary on the mitzvahs), G-d wants us to remember that everything belongs to Him and is controlled by Him. As a person goes about conducting his business and acquiring wealth, he can begin to develop a sense of self-importance. He can start to feel like he controls his own destiny and that he alone is responsible for his great successes. So every 50 years, G-d reminds him that He is in control. Whatever this person may have acquired is returned to its original owner, and he realizes that only G-d can control who ends up with what.

The Yovel, then, is a lesson in humility. It reminds the person of how small he is and how little power and influence he has over destiny. It's G-d who runs the world, and only He will decide who gets what.

The Lesson in Pride:

Ralbag (Rabbi Levi ben Gershon) approaches the Yovel from another angle. A person who needs to sell himself as a slave or sell his property is generally from the ranks of the poor and destitute. Such a person can easily lose all hope of ever becoming successful again, and his life can spiral downward until he feels like he has nothing left to live for. To prevent this from happening, G-d instituted the Yovel. Even if a man becomes so desperate as to have to sell himself as a slave and sell his home, he need not despair. There is light at the end of the tunnel, and hope for a better future. Come the Yovel, he will automatically regain his freedom and have his home and property returned to him. This knowledge keeps his spirits up even while he is in his difficult state, and gives him a reason to keep persevering for a better future.

The Yovel, then, is a lesson in pride. It reminds a person to remain strong and hopeful even when things are looking down. It tells him that he will never be truly defeated, and that he always has the ability to turn things around again.

The Paradox:

The Yovel speaks of strength, pride and perseverance, and at the same time of humility and human fragility. It is thus the mitzvah which best captures the paradox of Mount Sinai, the mountain of humility.

The lesson is clear: In life, a person must assume both attitudes. He must constantly juggle his humility and pride. There is great danger in exaggerating one attitude at the expense of the other.

A person who focuses too much on his frailty and smallness can become stagnant and unmotivated. Why work hard and persevere, when he has so little say regarding his success in life? One needs self-belief and strength of character to stay motivated and keep persevering.

On the other hand, if a person gets too caught up in himself, it could lead to a false sense of power and invincibility. Strength of character can easily turn into arrogance, and he could forget about G-d. One needs humility as well. He needs to keep in mind that ultimately G-d runs the world, and we must therefore submit ourselves to His will.

We must aspire to be like Mount Sinai—the quintessential humble mountain.

# Slice of LIFE

## Forgiving Ourselves

By Edith Brown

Did you ever think to yourself, if only I had done this? I should have known better. Why wasn't I there?

There are so many forms of imprisonment. But the harshest form of prison is the cell we condemn ourselves to. We become our own judge and jury. The sentence is life. No parole. Throw away the key.

The self-imposed demons that inhabit our minds monopolize our abilities. Instead of living in the world around us, we live in a world of our own creation. And time stands still for no one.

My heart was bleeding and my soul ached for that golden opportunity to change the natural course of life's events. An opportunity that could never have been.

I wanted to be free of the thoughts that kept me in bondage, but I didn't know how to let go. I couldn't talk about it. I was so ashamed. I have always believed that releasing your secrets set you free, but I was afraid of the price, I was afraid of being judged.

Today a dear rabbi called to say hello. Though it is Sunday, and he may not be in his office, he thinks of me. I met this rabbi many years ago, when he was making his rounds at a hospital and he stopped in Mother's room to visit, may she rest in peace. The wonderful rabbi has continued to do his best to guide me in the seven years now since Mother has passed. I must say I have not always made this task an easy one. Today seemed as if it was going to be one of those days. But something different was about to happen. Neither one of us could have ever predicted the outcome.

A few minutes into the conversation I began to speak about my Mother. I miss her so much. The Rabbi said, "Edith, you're still grieving for your Mother and it is killing you. I don't know what I can say to you anymore. I don't know how I can help you with your grief."

"But, but Rabbi, it was my fault Mama passed. I... I didn't check the nasal cannula. I should have."

This was the one and only time I asked the nurse to do it. Mother was on her side as I was dressing a wound. I provided all the medical care. The nurses would only assist. Whenever Mother was on her side, it was important to loosen the nasal cannula from around her neck.

Mother wasn't feeling well and it was taking me longer than usual. I got nervous that I was keeping the nurse too long, so I was rushing and didn't check for myself if the nasal cannula was loose enough. I kept asking the nurse, "Are you sure you checked the nasal cannula? It isn't too tight?" She kept smiling pleasantly and repeating, "No, it's fine."

Then the time came to turn Mama over. My world collapsed! Oh, my G-d – the nasal cannula! It choked her! But the nurse looked at me and said she was fine. I just looked back at her in utter disbelief. Was she blind? Mama had already lost all color in her face. I had to keep repeating to her, "No, no, look at Mama! She is not breathing!"

A couple of minutes passed. It felt like an eternity. I just stood there. My heart was pounding. The world felt like it had come to an end. The nurse finally realized what had happened. She started screaming for help. Staff came running with a crash cart. One injection after another they gave Mother, trying to restart her heart again. All in vain. It was too late.

One nurse tried to escort me from the room, but I wouldn't leave. I'll never forget her face. She couldn't look at me. I just paced back and forth and kept repeating "chemical code," which meant they could give Mother drug injections, but no heroic measures were to be taken. No CPR, no respirator. Mother had not wanted to live as a vegetable. No one ever thought when the time came I would have the strength to follow through with Mother's wishes, but I never doubted myself for a second.

Finally, I agreed to sit outside the room. The nurse called a dear friend of mine. We barely talked, but it was comforting to hear his voice on the other end. Mother's attending doctor came out of her room with tears in his eyes. Though I knew the answer, I still asked, "Did she make it?" He just shook his head and walked away. He was in too much pain.

I screamed so loud my voice echoed through the corridors. I took the phone and threw it. I went back in the room and sat down next to Mama. I kissed her. My

sweet, beautiful, Yiddishe Mama. I sat down and held her soft hand.

Just then the chaplain rabbi appeared. I asked him to call my rabbi. We spoke briefly to make arrangements. He has always been a man of few words. Though now as I held the phone to my ear, there was mostly an awkward silence. He too, was mourning for me, but I understood. I knew he felt my pain.

The nurse asked whom she could call. I asked for Mother's two regular doctors. They dropped everything and came to be with me. The first one arrived and sat with me over an hour as I told him what had taken place. He agreed with me it was pointless to do an autopsy. I knew this was not allowed in Judaism. It was time to let Mama rest. The next one, who had been by our side for many years arrived, his eyes sad, and asked me if I was okay.

My rabbi interrupts my memories, "Edith, I know all this."

"Then, Rabbi, how can you tell me it isn't my fault? Mama choked to death. How can this be G-d's will? I know it was an accident by the nurse, but I knew better, Rabbi. I have no peace. I didn't protect Mama. Mama was on her side, I was changing her bandages, you know I never let them do anything."

The tears were streaming down my face. I was crying so hard I don't know how the rabbi could make sense of my words.

"Rabbi, I should have checked it. I should have."

"Edith, you gave Mama a thousand more days than she would have ever had. You took wonderful care of your Mother. Edith, I believe it was your Mother's time. Your Mother was suffering."

"Yes, Rabbi, I know Mama needed to rest, but not like that."

I couldn't hear him. I just kept on crying. Then all of a sudden my rabbi said, "Edith, stop, stop. I want you to repeat a prayer first in Hebrew, then we will say it in English. 'Baruch Dayan HaEmet. Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, the True Judge.' Edith, if you truly believe in G-d, then you will know it was His doing."

"Rabbi, when I go to the cemetery to visit Mama, I will ask for forgiveness."

"You don't have to, Edith. Don't ask anymore. There is nothing to forgive."

Something happened. I felt different. It was instant. For the first time since my mother passed, I could finally breathe. I was free.

I still miss my beloved mother, but I miss her differently now. Peacefully.

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ISSUE 1401

B"H

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# INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

## Highlighting ahavas Yisrael in the Three Weeks

The name of the recipient of this letter was not released.  
20 Tammuz, 5711,  
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Greetings and blessings,

I was happy to have had the opportunity to get to know your two sons who visited me. They made a positive impression on me. I am certain that if, from time to time, one would speak a little more about Yiddishkeit with them and the observance of mitzvos in actual deed, it would make a fitting impression on them. And it would be manifest in their [conduct and that of] the members of their household, [causing them] to come closer to the Torah and its mitzvos to a greater degree than at present.

In our discussion, they told me that you are suffering from problems with your prostate and that a doctor gave an opinion that it is appropriate to perform an operation. You, however, have hesitations about the matter because you feel that you are not strong enough.

In my opinion, you should ask the opinion of two doctors who are specialists [in the field] and you should also tell them your opinion. If they decide that you should undergo the operation, you should — in a good and auspicious hour — follow their instructions, and G-d will enable the operation to be suitable and successful, [enabling] you to enjoy good and long years. In a simple sense, that means good, long, and tranquil years. There is, however, an inner meaning — that one's years should be good and long in a spiritual sense. This means [years] filled with Yiddishkeit, for oneself and also through influencing one's surroundings, particularly one's children and grandchildren, that they should conduct their homes and their lives according to the path of the Torah and its mitzvos.

The time in which we find ourselves is referred to as "the Three Weeks," a time period that recalls the time of the destruction of [the Beis HaMikdash]. We must remember what the Gemara teaches us — that the primary reason for the destruction was "unwarranted hatred." Since we all desire and hope for the true and Ultimate Redemption in the immediate future, we must invest special energy in eradicating the factor that led to the destruction. This means putting special emphasis on ahavas Yisrael, the love of our fellow Jew.

In particular, the above has a special connection to kohanim, who, in the blessing [that precedes] the Priestly Blessing speak of "blessing His nation Israel with love." As my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, communicated in the name of one of the hidden tzaddikim, these words also have the intent that the kohanim will bless the Jewish people [that they be granted] the attribute of love, that they will have love for each other and that this love will be expressed in actual deed, in material matters and, even more so, in spiritual matters.

I hope to hear good news from you and ask you to convey greetings to your sons, from whom I also wish to hear good news.

With blessing,

## QUESTIONS FOR THE RABBI

### Should We Live Together Before Marriage?

By Aron Moss

**Question:** I am debating with a friend about the pros and cons of living together before marriage. I think it's crazy to marry someone you haven't lived with. How can you know what life will be like? It makes no sense! What if they need the window open at night and you need it closed? On the other hand, people who live together for prolonged periods of time don't seem to be doing any better at marriage than those who don't. So who's right?

**Answer:** The argument is that by living together you can know how someone behaves in various situations. Once you have spent a year or so under one roof, you have tested the relationship to see if it can withstand the varied pressures of life.

But wait. That isn't true. You only know how things are for that year. You haven't seen how things will be five years from now. A lot can happen in five years. Surely you need to spend five years together to see how that works before committing for a lifetime.

And then there is the concern about what may happen in ten years. People change, we grow older, sometimes wiser, sometimes not. So you should really live together for a decade before deciding to commit.

And what about children? They change the equation entirely. You need to have kids first to see how the relationship will be when you have kids. And then, a lot of relationships become strained once the kids move out. Maybe you should live together through empty-nesting and old age, and only then see if you are compatible and ready to commit.

This is upside down thinking. Committing when you know everything will be fine, is not commitment. The very definition of commitment is that you will stick with it, no matter what will be. And none of us know what will be.

If you base your decision to marry someone on the assumption that you know everything about them, what happens when you discover that in fact you don't? Better recognize that life is full of surprises. Commitment is the force that keeps you together when those surprises come.

So when you meet someone, find out about their values, discuss their priorities, explore their character. Their habits may change, but their character won't change much. And if you later discover that they sleep with the window open and you need it closed - people with good character who are committed to the relationship will be able to work that one out.

## A WORD

from the Director

*When the Jewish people left Egypt, G-d commanded that when they would enter the Land of Israel, the land should be worked for six years and allowed to lie fallow in the seventh. "Then shall the land keep a Sabbath to the L-rd." This commandment, the mitzva of shemita (the Sabbatical year), is enumerated in this week's Torah portion, Behar.*

*Interestingly, the Torah presents the sequence of years in reverse chronological order; mentioning first the shemita year; "Then shall the land keep a Sabbath," followed by the six years that precede it, "Six years you shall sow your field." The reason for this inverted sequence is the significant influence the Sabbatical year yields over the first six. Indeed, the shemita year is the source of strength and power from which the other six years derive their vitality. In the same way, it is the holy Shabbat from which we derive the capacity to work throughout the six days of the workweek. The Shabbat day exerts a powerful influence, and affects the tone of the six days which precede it.*

*Some people find it hard to understand how a Jew can live according to Torah on a regular weekday. How it is possible for him to go about his business, given the Torah's many restrictions and commandments? The entire world around him is filled with non-Jews to whom the Torah is a foreign concept; moreover, the dominant culture in which he is immersed seems to operate according to entirely different principles. How can the Jew realistically be expected to compete with the world at large and withstand all the pressure?*

*The answer is found in this week's Torah portion.*

*The six days of the workweek commence with the knowledge that the seventh day is sanctified, "a Sabbath to the L-rd." The holiness of Shabbat provides us with the strength to overcome all difficulties, and enables us to live in strict accordance with the Torah's commandments. Indeed, it is only when we live our lives in consonance with the Torah that we are successful.*

*Similarly, the holy year of shemita affects the first six years in the cycle, during which we work the land. Deriving strength from the seventh year, the Jew is thus able to contend with the world at large - and precisely through the medium of his performance of mitzvos.*

J. I. Gutterman

# IT HAPPENED *Once...*

## A Rebbe Goes Shopping

By Yerachmiel Tilles

On a number of occasions, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, told about his three-month stay in Vienna in 5663 (1903) with his father and predecessor, Rabbi Sholom DovBer, who required medical treatment. During that time, they studied together the laws of monetary claims from the Tur and the Shulchan Aruch. They also studied discourses of chassidic teachings on the weekly Torah reading.

Because of his weakened condition, the doctors told Rabbi Sholom DovBer not to engage in any strenuous physical activity, and even not to overexert himself mentally.

Rabbi Sholom DovBer's habit during that period was to take a brief rest on the couch after lunch. He didn't lie down exactly, but would sort of recline, with one leg up on the couch. Once he remained for a considerable time in this position, much longer than usual.

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak wasn't sure what to do. It seemed as if Rabbi Sholom DovBer wasn't even in this world; he was on his side, and his eyes were bulging in a strange way. He was afraid to wake his father up. But he was even more afraid to leave him be.

He began to walk back and forth loudly near the sofa, hoping his father would wake. When that didn't work, he started moving the table around, making even more noise, but that didn't help either. And by now the hour was getting quite late.

It wasn't until after nine straight hours that the rebbe finally stirred. "What day is it today?" he asked his son. "Which parshah [weekly Torah reading] is it?"

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak answered him that it was Wednesday, and told him which parshah it was. He thought his father seemed confused.

Rabbi Sholom DovBer then prepared to recite his evening prayers, which he accompanied with a melody of the Alter Rebbe (Rabbi Schneur Zalman, founder of the Chabad dynasty)—as was his custom on the first night of Rosh Hashanah.

The next morning, the rebbe asked his son if they had some money (when they traveled together, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak attended to the finances). Although they were really quite low in funds, he answered "yes" so as not to disappoint his father. Shortly thereafter, he went and pawned his silver cane and gave the money to his father. The rebbe then announced that he would be going out, put on his coat and left. Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, sensing that his father did not want him along, remained by himself in their hotel suite.

Some time later, there was a knock on the door. He opened to a delivery boy, who asked if he was "Schneersohn." Upon confirmation, he handed him the box he was carrying. Attached was a note which said, in the rebbe's handwriting, "Take this package and pay the man twenty-five crowns."

Over the next few hours, several more packages arrived with the same message, each from a different store. When Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak looked over the names of the firms on the boxes, he realized that they were all stores specializing in women's and girls' apparel. He presumed that his father had bought presents for his granddaughters, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak's three daughters.

That evening, when Rabbi Sholom DovBer returned, he told his son to prepare to travel. He said they would need to take along tallit and tefillin (implying that they would be away for more than a day), but he didn't tell him their destination. Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak had to borrow some money for traveling expenses.

The next day, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak bundled the packages, paid the hotel bill and arranged a cab to the train station. Once there, the rebbe told him to purchase tickets to Pressburg. When they got off the train, it was 9:30 in the evening, so they checked into a small inn.

In the morning, Rabbi Sholom DovBer said: "We are going to pay a shivah call to the family of a pious Torah scholar who are in mourning." Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak started to look for a cab to take them into the city, but his father told him they would walk. He picked up the suitcase and they headed downtown.

On the street, they encountered a hurrying yeshivah student. Rabbi Sholom DovBer stopped him and asked for directions to the Bick home. The young man responded impatiently, "I don't have time. I'm in a rush to get back to the yeshivah. Just go straight, and ask further on."

"Indeed," said the rebbe, "is that how you fulfill the mitzvah of hospitality? Can't you tell that we are strangers here?"

The young man calmed down and apologized. He explained to them carefully how to go, and then added that the family was sitting shivah. Upon further questioning, it turned out that the head of the family had passed away during the hours of the rebbe's unusually long rest on the sofa.

The rebbe thanked the yeshivah student, and continued with his son down the street. When they reached the house, they entered, and there they saw a woman with her three daughters, sitting shivah. After offering words of comfort to the widow and her daughters, the rebbe then suggested to his son that they go out for a while. They walked, and came upon a large yeshivah with many students who were sitting and studying. The rebbe engaged a few of them in discussions about what they were learning. Among these was the young man who had given them directions. The rebbe entered into a pilpul (complex Talmudic analysis) with one of the students, and afterwards praised him highly.

Upon returning to the house, the rebbe spoke again to the bereaved. When they asked him who he was, he told them that he was a distant relative. When they asked if he knew the deceased, he responded that it didn't matter.

Subsequently, the rebbe guided the conversation to the subject of the girls' future. The woman complained about her difficult situation, especially now that her husband had died. She couldn't afford to buy clothes for her daughters, nor was she being approached with appropriate matches for them.

The rebbe recommended to her as a match for her eldest daughter the yeshivah student whose analytical abilities he had praised, and for her second daughter he suggested the young man they had first met in the street. "And don't worry about trousseaux for them," added the rebbe. "I have everything they need."

Eventually, both these matches were successful. Before each engagement became official, the young bride-to-be received a parcel of clothing from the purchases of Rabbi Sholom DovBer, and everything fit perfectly! The first wedding took place while the rebbe was still in Vienna; the second was a few months later, after Shavuot.

About ten years later, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak happened to be in the Pressburg area. He decided to look up the Bick daughters to see how things had worked out. He found the street, but could not locate the house. There was now a large brick home where previously the cottage had stood.

A young woman came out and greeted him. She said she recognized him as having been present with his father at her two older sisters' engagements. She told him that she too was now married, and happily so, thank G-d, but that both her sisters were even more fortunate. Her older brother-in-law was the chief rabbi of a prominent city, and the other was the dean of a yeshivah. "I wish your father had arranged my match too!"

*Biographical note: Rabbi Abraham Bick (the girls' father in the story), originally from Mohilev in Podolia, was the author of Bikkurei Aviv, a wide-ranging commentary on the weekly Torah readings and also certain sections of the Prophets, as well as on the Talmud and on Jewish law, published in Lvov in 5633 (1873), in which he quotes often from "great chassidic masters."*

## PARSHAH IN A NUTSHELL

On the mountain of Sinai, G-d communicates to Moses the laws of the Sabbatical year: every seventh year, all work on the land should cease, and its produce becomes free for the taking for all, man and beast.

Seven Sabbatical cycles are followed by a fiftieth year—the Jubilee year, on which work on the land ceases, all indentured servants are set free, and all ancestral estates in the Holy Land that have been sold revert to their original owners.

Behar also contains additional laws governing the sale of lands, and the prohibitions against fraud and usury.

## CANDLE LIGHTING



	Shabbos 24 - 25 May	
	Begins	Ends
Melbourne	4:55	5:55
Adelaide	4:58	5:56
Brisbane	4:45	5:40
Darwin	6:10	7:01
Gold Coast	4:43	5:38
Perth	5:05	6:02
Sydney	4:40	5:37
Canberra	4:45	5:43
Launceston	4:37	5:39
Auckland	4:59	5:58
Wellington	4:47	5:49
Hobart	4:32	5:36
Byron Bay	4:41	5:36

## CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

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### PARSHAS BEHAR • 19 IYAR • 24 MAY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	MINCHA	5:00 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS	5:30 PM
SHABBOS DAY:	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA	9:48 AM
	SHACHARIS	10:00 AM
	MINCHA	4:45 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS	5:55 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS	8.00/9.15/10.00 AM
	MINCHA	5:00 PM
	MAARIV	5:45 PM